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# Graduate Project to Explore Factors Affecting Completion of Final Degree Requirements for a Master Degree in Nursing

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Running head: DON'T GET STUCK IN THE MUCK

Graduate Project

To Explore Factors Affecting Completion of Final Degree

Requirements for a Master Degree in Nursing

Sharon Gentile

Augsburg College

**Augsburg College  
Department of Nursing  
Master of Arts in Nursing Program  
Thesis or Graduate Project Approval Form**

This is to certify that Sharon Gentile has successfully defended her Graduate Project entitled "A Project To Explore Factors Affecting Completion of Final Degree Requirements for a Master Degree in Nursing" and fulfilled the requirements for the Master of Arts in Nursing degree.

Date of Oral defense October 26, 2007.

**Committee member signatures:**

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## ABSTRACT

### Graduate Project to Explore Factors Affecting Completion of Final Degree Requirements for a Master Degree in Nursing

Sharon Gentile

10/13/07

The purpose of this project was to explore issues that influence Master Degree completion as perceived by graduate nursing students, using focus groups. All eight graduate nursing student participants recently completed structured coursework, but had not submitted a final paper or project. Margaret Newman's Health as an Expanding Consciousness Nursing Theory was applied as the conceptual framework used to process the information obtained. Dialogue between moderator and participants occurred during accompaniment enabling valuable information to be elicited, and participants' personal clarification of concerns; therefore establishing praxis. Issues emerged related to adult learners seeking defined expectations and effective relationships with advisors. Situational issues did not surface. Information gathered will be useful in future curriculum planning and policy development to potentially enhance the Masters in Nursing graduation rate.



classes  
immersion excursions  
reflections  
project completion

ALL of IT-EVERYTHING

Dedicated to  
Grandma Mamie

## Acknowledgements

It takes a village to raise a graduate nursing student. We don't know what we don't know, and rely entirely on those who have been there to reach out and grab, embrace, include, mentor, empathize, encourage, befriend, and love us no matter what! This is my village....

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\*Susan you picked up the pieces more than once!

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\*Desire, Jen, Jules, April you all keep me young!

\*Sue O. who muddled through Europe and complexity science with me

&

\*Joe for loving me unconditionally, and keeping me fed!

I couldn't have done this without my village, thank you to all.

Sg

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Graduate Project  
To Explore Factors Affecting Completion of Final Degree for  
a Master Degree in Nursing

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The graduate program at Augsburg College in Transcultural Nursing has grown in popularity and enrollment since its' inception in 2000. Students have appreciated a curriculum focused on developing nursing leadership skills, promoting commitment to social justice mindsets, and stimulating critical thought processes. The immersion experiences have offered students the opportunity to identify health inequities in the United States and abroad. In some cases, transformation has gone beyond the spirit of knowledge, by creating new action plans in the form of life changing decisions on the students' part. The whole educational experience has challenged rigid world-views, one class at a time. As a student who has finished the required coursework, I was most intrigued to note that the completion rate for the Master in Nursing program currently stands at a mere 17%. This number is a statistic reflecting total number of enrollees from 2000-2006 in a

program that takes from three to seven years to complete. Unknown is the number of students that have either dropped out, or slowed down, yet remain on the current list. This project targets the portion of students who have finished structured coursework, but have not submitted a final paper or project indicating completion. (Augsburg College Masters CCNE Self Study, pIV-2) Given this well received graduate nursing program, I wondered why very accomplished graduate nursing students linger in pre completion purgatory, seemingly stalled, wordless in the final stretch? What happens to students as they contemplate that final thesis or project? The low completion number is likely an indicator of a complex set of factors. This lack of completion has been noted by the academic staff and faculty in the nursing department who strive to make the program the best it can be, facilitating students to professional and personal success. A complete analysis of the low completion rate has not been done. During an assessment of the entire graduate nursing program performed by the nursing department faculty in 2006, the low completion number emerged as an issue that would need further clarification. Questions do continue to linger regarding the factors that affect the completion of final degree

requirements (Augsburg College Masters CCNE Self Study, pIV-2).

#### Purpose

The purpose of this project was to explore the thoughts of graduate nursing students who had finished their course work, but not their final project or thesis. It was necessary to learn what students perceived were the factors that influence completion of this final step of graduate studies. This information is valuable to department faculty. If students' reasons were revealed, heard and understood, an effort could be targeted to respond to student needs. If this effort could increase the completion rate, then the importance of this project would be realized. A higher completion rate would preserve the graduate nursing program credibility, thus promoting viability of the present program and feasibility of future expansion.

#### Nursing Theory/Conceptual Framework

Margaret Newman's Nursing Theory of Health as Expanding Consciousness was applied to the experience and the process as participant graduate nursing students

explored what issues influenced their progress toward finishing their final project or thesis. The graduate students have progressed successfully through the structured portion of the program, and have reached a time to independently determine the topic for a project or thesis, without the aid of a course structure. This last challenge could be called 'chaos,' or 'untoward event' using Newman's terminology (Newman, 94, p.36). This 'chaos' is characterized by the amount of anxiety generated when facing this new task.

Utilizing this theory, I conducted focus groups to gain insight into participants' experience of obstacles to completion. The mutual effort between me as the moderator, and participant mobilizes participants to a higher level of wellbeing or 'expanded consciousness' (Newman, 1994). The student has a greater self-awareness, and is more at peace with the decision made (be it to stop, or to pursue completion of the degree). Newman describes this as a 'choice point' (Newman, 1994).

Being a peer moderator necessitated letting go of control. I accompanied participant graduate students during this journey to a new awareness. The concept of accompaniment is defined by a relationship of equals that

forms when a need arises to work through, and together, new direction emerges. Newman would define this new direction as 'expanded consciousness.'

In my view, the concept of accompaniment parallels Newman's idea of 'process wisdom.' "Process wisdom involves openness and relationality" (Newman, 1994, p.77). This 'wisdom' is the new self-awareness of the participant, which was shared with me as the peer moderator during the partnership formed within the focus group process. The partnership assures a presence with participants forming the concept of 'accompaniment.' Historically, the concept of accompaniment emerged during the social justice movement, described when speaking of solidarity. The concept of accompaniment assured interdependence and mutuality in relationships during the solidarity movement (ELCA, 2006, p. 5). This sense of partnership can be applied to the partner relationship Newman describes between nurses and clients, ultimately empowering both with a shared knowledge and understanding. Newman's Theory of Expanding Consciousness can be applied to visualize the unique relationship developed within the focus group, composed of graduate student participants and myself. During this interaction, patterns or trends emerged from



the dialogue among us. Trends are like the building blocks of information and insights (Newman, 1994, p.86). Margaret Newman asserts that research for information/data collection is only part of the process. Here is where process and content become integrated. In her theory, the participant should benefit from the partnership by gaining a self-awareness labeled 'expanding consciousness.' Through accompaniment, partners share and reflect on patterns. "This is research as praxis defined as thoughtful reflection and action that occur in synchrony, in the direction of transforming the world"(Newman, 1994, P.92). Pattern recognition and acknowledgement potentiate 'health as expanding consciousness' (Newman, 1994, p.92). The researcher is a co-participant in the research as praxis (Connor, 1998). This also alludes to the concept of accompaniment.

Utilization of this method facilitates the participants' understanding of their own issues that emerge during the interaction. Nursing praxis blends theory, research, and practice. This synthesis assists participants to recognize the power within, enabling them to move to a higher level of consciousness (Endo, 2004).

## CHAPTER TWO

## Literature Review

Prior to implementing the focus groups it was important to have an understanding of the potential factors that could be affecting completion of students' final project or thesis.

Adult learners have come to a point in their lives where priorities have evolved. Knowles' four characteristics of adult learners include self-direction, the need to reconcile life experiences with new information, the acknowledgement from facilitators and peers of current expertise, and the drive to 'problem solve' (McMillan, et al,2007). Getting past the concept of 'problem solving' and impressing upon the adult learner the necessity of problem identification and exploration as a tool to problem solve; would be a hurdle for the potential grad student to progress toward a goal of completion.

The graduate nursing student does acknowledges the importance of peer learning, but wants clear-cut goals, defined expectations, and readily accessible tools and direction by instructors (Parker, 2006). The novelty of a graduate student's final project looming ahead could

produce ambivalence as it may not be perceived as "clear cut" by that student, and therefore confusing.

To teach an adult learner, the instructor must be aware of the differences in learning styles. By acknowledging and valuing those differences, teaching can be designed to optimize learning (Russell, 2006). Instructors need to be open to diverse learning styles. Reflection has been identified as an integral part of the adult learners' needs when processing new information. Instructors may need to build time into curriculum for reflection and dialogue to fulfill this requirement (Putney, 1998).

It is noted that first impressions of education eventually evolve to become broader appreciation of new feelings from new information. Reflection is so important for the adult learner to process (Rush, et al, 2006). The adult learner also appreciates a more interactive approach marked by reflection and dialogue to facilitate their unique learning style (Bankert, 2005). Satisfaction in learning is often directly related to the quality and effectiveness of the instructor (Debourough, 2003). As noted before, the more aware the instructor is of adult learning needs, the more effective the instruction rates.

An adult learner doesn't need a thesis or project to summarize learning marked by graduation. This is a challenge for the program or instructor to find an incentive that appeals to adult learner needs, yet imparts the importance of the final paper or project to the students' status in school.

The creation and utilization of consistent training models for research may allay the concern of the graduate student initiating their first endeavor into research (Barnes, et al, 2006). This would promote clarity so often sought after.

There are other factors that impede progress toward goals, not unique to the adult learner, but shared by many.

Procrastination transcends age and is prevalent in many students. Procrastination can have a positive outcome for some. It is noted that a few students actually are thought to work better under pressure (may revel in it) and produce the same quality results as those who do not procrastinate (Chu, Choi, 2005). More often, though, procrastination does take its toll on students.

Fear of failure can immobilize the classic procrastinator. This person experiences high anxiety, and tends to avoid the actual act of writing at all costs

(Onwisegbrzie, 2001). It seems that procrastination can be overcome if a person could be motivated (Lee, 2005). Some have been able to overcome procrastination by self-imposing deadlines. This technique takes discipline, and has been proven to not be as effective as external deadlines (Ariely, 2002). Rationalizing is often a response from procrastinators, limiting further productivity (Tuckman, 2005).

Perfectionism has its place among traits of a procrastinator, but not all perfectionists are procrastinators. Perfectionists may adopt risk avoidance behavior (procrastination) to justify an inability to perform, or ambivalence toward the importance of performing (Maner, 2006).

When procrastination merges with perfectionism, depression may ensue (Saddler, 1993). An adult learner may not use the word depression, but 'funk,' weight gain, limbo, emptiness, etc are often adjectives expressed by the graduate student.

The non-perfectionist student may still have 'fear of failure' feelings, and ascribe to risk avoidance behaviors, denial, or fear of feedback-don't ask, don't tell, don't write (Jackman, 2003). The challenge for instructors is

not to solve this dilemma, but to be available to assist the student in identification of the issue, and accompany the student through the process of overcoming the newly identified obstacle.

As students progress through their respective programs, the end looms; and an unexpected fear of "feeling like a fake" can immobilize some. Issues related to readiness, worthiness, and timeliness surface. These feelings may cause self-doubt and hesitation (deVries, 2005).

Gender, age, time, work, energy and family needs could also impact the completion rate. These situational factors would clearly dictate a different plan of action, if identified during the focus group discussion as significant.

## CHAPTER THREE

## Methodology

During this project, focus group methodology was chosen as the most effective way to elicit information needed. Focus group methodology to determine needs as identified by a defined group, has proven to be an effective strategy for a broader understanding of the groups' opinions (Stevens, 1996). Focus group interviews are a rich source of data, but it has been noted to be easier to manage when smaller groups are set up (McLafferty, 2004). Born out of marketing research techniques, focus groups have become an efficient, cost effective tool for generating answers to sensitive questions (Reed, 1997). When participants interact, insights are generated, as discussion is stimulated and reflection is encouraged. The relationship between moderator/investigator and participants is a significant component in generation of new information when exploring a question that has mutual implications for all involved (McLafferty, 2004).

Focus groups proved to be the ideal setting for dialogue among peers accompanying each other to generate thoughts in an effort to find reasons for the current

graduation rate, and suggestions to potentially increase the graduation rate.

### Participants

For this project, participants were identified as meeting the criteria of having finished their coursework, but not the final project or thesis. They were invited to join the focus group with mailed invitations. Thirty-two invitations were sent out to students who were currently finishing or had finished coursework since the graduate program's inception. (See Appendix) Careful attention to maintain confidentiality of potential participants made it necessary for the invitations to be addressed by nursing department administrative staff. As the moderator, I did not know the names included on the invitation list. The volunteers ready to share their story were identified by their response and later attendance. Three invitations were returned as address unknown. Ten people responded with definite interest in being involved. Of those ten, two were unable to participate because of time issues. A total of eight students became participants.

Two focus groups were formed. The first group had three participants. The second group was composed of two



participants. Three participants wanted to share but were unable to attend the scheduled group discussions. Individual interviews with these three did take place over the phone. Focus groups lasted two hours each. Phone interviews lasted an hour. Consent was obtained prior to the start of each focus group encounter. Verbal consent with follow-up written consent was obtained for phone interviews.

#### Implementation

As the project leader, I served as moderator of the focus groups formed to explore the factors that affect some Augsburg graduate students between finishing class work and completing final project or thesis. By not being attached to the academic staff at Augsburg, I hoped the relationship would be defined as a non-intimidating partnership, which would promote honesty and thoughtful reflection. I was their peer, and possessed an insider's understanding of what they encountered as they untangled the intricacies of the final project or paper expectations. Participants were encouraged to share, and were assured of confidentiality outside the realm of the focus group.

Participants were advised at the onset that they could leave at any time if they were feeling uncomfortable.

The purpose of the focus group was explained to the participants prior to initiating discussion. Participants were advised that there were no specific questions that would be asked of them during the interaction. The agenda was open ended; the intent was to stimulate candid response, not structure direction. To begin each session, I shared the two-fold significance of the study: to identify the perceived needs of the participants as they shared what obstacles they were facing, and to foster self-awareness, empowering participants to own their thoughts and decisions. Being one of them created a collegial atmosphere. They noted that I am also grappling with the ongoing effort to finish this degree. The focus groups were held off campus, over a meal. The environment was intended to provide a stage for candid and honest responses. Prompting was not needed to keep the conversation lively. Consent was obtained prior to the start of each encounter.

All thoughts verbalized by the participants were transcribed as they were being said. During this project, every response was transcribed without identifying the



participant. At the end of the discussion, transcribed ideas were read back to the participants to validate the accuracy of the content.

As the moderator, I attempted to keep themes that emerged during the first group separate from the second group, to protect the integrity of the information. Each group had a unique discussion. I could not let the findings from the first group insidiously affect the direction of the second group. This was done by verbatim transcription of content, and not verbally participating in idea exchange.

#### Development of a Visual Model of the Conceptual Framework

The application of Margaret Newman's Health as Expanding Consciousness Nursing Theory to focus group methodology illuminated accompaniment as a central concept of a model for this project.

A diagram to depict this conceptual framework would include a peer moderator at the center, with up to four participants surrounding the center in a focus group configuration. The interaction between moderator and participant would be represented by two-way arrows to signify the dynamic of accompaniment or partnership formed. As participants become more at ease with each other and the

moderator, and some of the issue has been addressed, new relationships develop among the participants. Two-way arrows need to be between each of the participant couples to depict the partnership formed between them, also signifying accompaniment. The effectiveness of using focus group methodology is the potential of one member's thoughts triggering another thread on which the group then builds an interactive conversation. The informal relationship among the group builds trust, which generates dialogue, insights, and thoughtful reflections. A gray cloud over the initial interactions represents the chaos that participants conquer as they move to a higher level of consciousness or deeper self-awareness. (See Appendix)

## CHAPTER FOUR

## Evaluation of Effectiveness

The focus group method utilizing Margaret Newman's Theory of Health as Expanding Consciousness was especially effective in eliciting responses and usable suggestions from all participants. During each focus group discussion, all members contributed to the ongoing conversation. No prompting was needed. The participants wanted to be heard. Each one was seeking guidance though, and did display a personal agenda. Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to join the focus group, and enjoyed reconnecting with peers.

The benefits that came out of the project were two fold. Valuable information was obtained, and the participants' personal revelations were consistent with Newman's concept of praxis. Margaret Newman would recognize these relationships that not only generate information, but also facilitate participants' personal insight as an example of praxis. Participant responses emphasized the importance of organization and the significance of relationships as major influences on successful completion of final degree requirements.

## Findings

In this project, my intent was to hear and understand the participants' thoughts by accompanying them during their personal reflections.

This particular group gave candid responses revealing insights and offered suggestions most applicable to current students regarding policies, curriculum, and relationships between them and the instructors. Key ideas fell into three categories to include communication, organizational, and relational. (See Appendix)

Communication related concerns included access by technical connection via email and effective communication with faculty. Currently, email access is cut off when course work is done unless the student requests that it continue. Participants voiced frustration with lack of guidance from advisors. Some didn't even realize that program advisors were different, or could be different from final advisors. All sought a meaningful relationship with an advisor or mentor, marked by accessibility and enthusiasm. Participants shared their perception that staff was already too busy to accommodate their needs, even though participants were unsure or unable to articulate what their specific needs were. Suggestions from the

participants to remedy this include clarification of advisor status early, and active involvement of program advisor until officially handed off to final advisor.

Organizational issues cropped up often during discussion. Participants fretted over inconsistent presentations in class concerning their final work, with expectations that were not clearly defined. Each participant identified a different time they had received the final guideline booklet. Some even had to repeatedly request it be handed out. Most participants did not feel ready or adequately prepared for this final step in the process of completion and voiced a feeling of "being clueless." One participant informed the group that some other programs don't still require a final project or report. She questioned the purpose of doing it at all. More than once the comment was made that it was strange that students were allowed to participate by "walking" at commencement ceremonies even though all final requirements were not met. By "walking" participants felt as though the final project or thesis was an afterthought. Overall, the group stated that feedback was slow during classes, and dreaded the time commitment involved in pursuing completion of their project or thesis. One participant stated that it



took weeks for papers to be returned, and wondered how the feedback could be any timelier when working on the final.

All wanted defined expectations for the final project or thesis, reasonable access to staff for ongoing support, and consistent follow up in a timely manner. The final guideline booklet should be brought out early in the program and mentioned in every class. Final expectations should be discussed in every class, closely following booklet points. Participants emphasized that topics don't need to be known or discussed during classes, but the process and expectations of a final project or thesis needed to be understood by students. They need the opportunity to ask questions without feeling embarrassed.

Relationships were very important to the participant students. It was mentioned that if peers had not been assertive, they could and did lose interest in continuing with classes before getting to the final requirements. Another participant reminded the group that most students are working adults, and that efforts to secure a topic that could be useful or applicable in the work setting would be beneficial to students that treasure every minute. Again it was mentioned that a meaningful relationship with an advisor to support ongoing conversation about the final

expectations would alleviate the feeling that the final is insurmountable.

Most participants declared that the focus group itself provided a cozy conversation, and felt this format could be utilized more often, even in class. Those that were less assertive did appreciate being invited, and thought that all efforts of inclusion in such by faculty or mentors, would foster a sense of belonging. A smaller group would enable members to ask questions, reflect, and process new information in a cooperative manner. Participants do acknowledge that advisors were busy, and could be supplemented informally with mentors. This comment validates the use of accompaniment and it's effective application to smaller groups as proposed in the conceptual model. This group still had a longing for connections, and a hunger to complete their degree. They came searching for answers.

Every identified theme fell under communication, organizational, or relationship issues. Because these responses were so recurrent, it does validate its accuracy. This is valuable information enabling faculty to understand the needs of the current student. With these new insights,

efforts could be channeled to optimize the current students' successful graduation.

With only a total of eight participants, all responses were given equal weight. This point is significant when categorizing themes, in essence creating a visual report card. Every one of the participants was overwhelmingly appreciative of being invited to share, and share they did. Each of the volunteers shared their personal concerns. There seemed to be a hunger for the connectedness of the groups, and an eagerness to have future informal small meetings to dialogue, defend, and or debrief over program expectations in addition to final project or paper issues.

Margaret Newman's Health as Expanding Consciousness Nursing Theory using focus groups was an effective way to generate the information sought. By accompanying these participants as their peer, during dialogue, reflection and discussion regarding what each participant perceived as issues that influenced their completion; these three major themes emerged. All of these concerns are important to adults engaging in new learning experiences as supported in literature. The surprise is that situational factors were not brought forth during this project, from these participants. (See appendix)

The make up of the participant group for this project included current students just finishing classes, or out of classes not more than a year. The suggestions put forth would address this group's needs, and could affect future students in the program. The group of participants for this project did not include students out of classes for more than a year, and may not reflect the thoughts of students further out of the program.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## Discussion and Reflection

What are the factors that affect graduate nursing students' completion rate? This project was designed to gather insights from graduate nursing students who had successfully finished coursework and were ready to work on their final project or thesis. Invitations were mailed out to thirty-two graduate nursing students who fit these criteria. Eight participants did agree to join the project. Of note, all eight that did come forth were either finishing classes now or had finished in the past year. None of the participants were out longer than a year. Did the project only appeal to those who still felt connected? Did past students already reconcile their decision not to finish, and not feel the need to even discuss it? This does not tell the whole story though. Why didn't students from past classes even respond? Had they already given up? Or did the situational issues that didn't emerge during focus groups composed of current students play a part in the lack of interest in participation of the groups further out? Or does it suggest that past students have already reconciled their decision not to finish. If the focus group participants'

information could be utilized to raise the graduation rate significantly, then this project will be productive despite not having past students' opinions

For this project, the focus group model using Margaret Newman's Health as Expanding Consciousness Nursing Theory as the conceptual framework was effective in eliciting thoughts, and even a few suggestions to enhance the nursing program completion rate. Newman's concept of praxis was evident in participants' renewed energy, reflection, and personal problem solving. One member of the first focus group was able to get back on track. During discussion, her conceptual framework became evident. This was the piece she was missing. Another member later informed me that she was starting small "finish it" groups during the summer for peer support during the final process.

Eight graduate students agreed to participate. Initially, the intended target group was to include all graduate nursing students that had finished course work, but hadn't submitted a final paper or project. The working title was 'Stuck in the Muck' but gradually evolved to 'Don't Get Stuck in the Muck' in an attempt to appeal to the most students, without having a negative perspective. Ironically, by changing the title, it appeared that the

topic was greatly appealing to current students finishing coursework this spring, or recently done with classes (within last year). All participants that responded to the invitation fit this description. Not one person from before this time frame even responded with an interest in participating. Graduate students out longer than a year did not respond to the invitation to join, and may find a distinctly different approach more appealing, enticing them to share their own thoughts.

Being the project moderator, as a peer, enabled me to accompany participants while they reflected on issues that are currently influencing their progress toward completion of their own final role. This specific group was highly motivated to stay on task and actually came seeking direction. They had a story to tell.

The success of using focus groups consisting of small cohorts of students that meet periodically with an advisor or mentor is a realistic suggestion. The group as a whole appreciated the small group structure of the focus group format, commenting on its' potential usefulness in future discussions regarding final project or thesis. The group was composed of peers all with similar goals, me included.





The collegial tone set the stage for insightful dialogue in a non-intimidating manner.

Is a peer mentor a missing link? Could a peer mentor be a collegial liaison between faculty and student? A peer mentor could straddle the line between staff and student with discreet professionalism, and monitor the relationship between curriculum effectiveness and student receptiveness. In this situation, utilization of Newman's Theory applied to focus groups elicited the sought after information and gave the student an opportunity to be heard. This is an example of praxis. This effort revealed both the tool (peer mentor) and a process model (accompaniment) for future application to promote academic effectiveness and efficiency.



## CHAPTER SIX

## Conclusion

Taking on this project initially seemed an exercise in closure. Often heard, the mantra to 'just get it done' was constantly on my mind. During implementation, though, I also gained new insight about the concept of accompaniment. To me, the concept of accompaniment is present though not articulated in Margaret Newman's Theory of Health as Expanding Consciousness. Making this presumption, it illuminates the applicability of this model to the everyday settings within the organization of the nursing department, and quite possibly could be used again to gain insight to any contentious issue (chaos) that may emerge. Taking it a step further, why would one need to limit this application to problem solving? The effectiveness of this method could enhance positive efforts towards future planning as well.

My personal understanding of accompaniment is exemplified in the following thought.



Evolution of Accompaniment

...to synthesize creates understanding

Understanding leads to mutual problem solving

Problem solving begets empowerment

Empowerment triggers hope

Hope softens patience

Patience enhances practice

Practice stimulates curiosity

Curiosity illuminates investigation

Investigation feeds synthesis...



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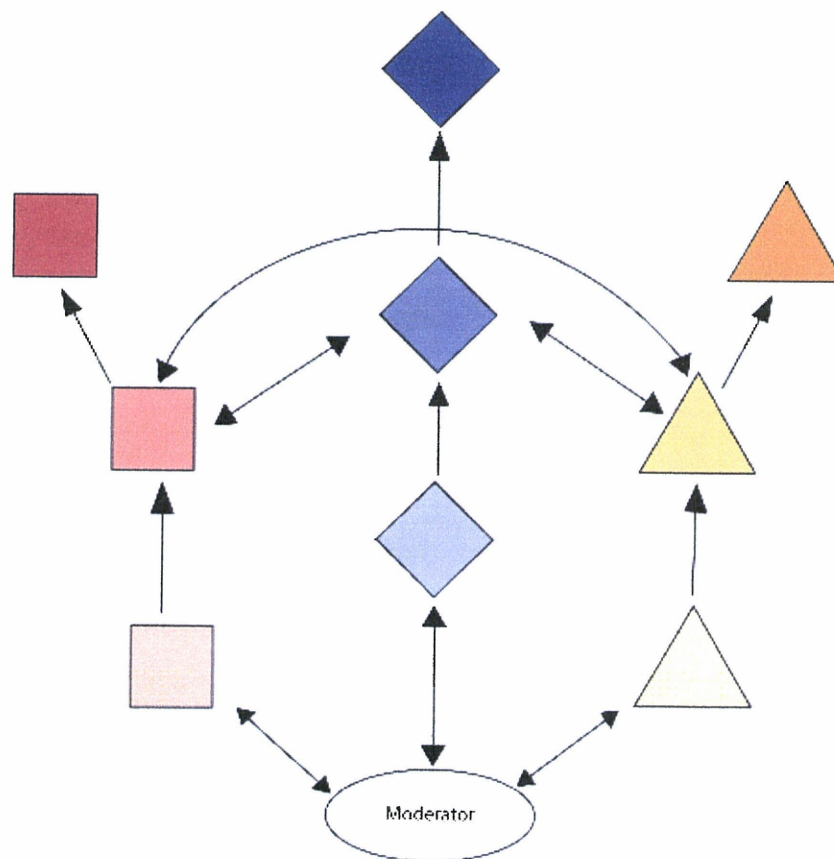
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**Margaret Newman's Health as Expanding Consciousness Nursing Theory**  
 Concept of Accompaniment utilizing Focus Groups  
 to dialogue regarding 'chaos' (gray shaded area)

**PRAXIS**

- \*working together participants gain a higher level of consciousness seen as personal clarification
- \*valuable information emerges in response to question posed



**ACCOMPANIMENT**-Initial interaction between moderator and individual participant. Each participant gains personal insight, which then enables participants to accompany each other during focus group dialogue. All participants emerge from chaos to a higher level of consciousness marked by personal clarification of thoughts/feelings/needs.





# Don't get stuck in the muck

## Participants Concerns

## Participants Suggestions

### COMMUNICATION ISSUES

Access-emails cut off when classes are done  
Augsburg email is cut off when classes are done  
Some instructors emphasize upcoming final, some blow it off  
No guidance from advisor  
Advisor assignment confusion  
Seeks meaningful relationship with advisor  
Staff too busy  
    “didn't know that final advisor could be different”  
    “never talked to either advisor”  
    “had to go to registrar to even find out who program advisor was”

\* Augsburg Email access should remain intact without request until totally finished  
\* Advisors should encourage use of office hours during ongoing class times for work or discussion regarding final project or paper  
\* Distinguish early on the difference between program advisor and final advisor  
\* Active involvement of program advisor (initiate conversation) until handoff to final advisor

### ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

“ Final thesis/project never mentioned during classes”  
“Expected a planned session specifically re to final project/paper”  
“Had to ask for the booklet as time went on”  
Felt unprepared for this step  
Lack of process expectations  
Felt clueless = “nothing specific to final expectations were presented while in class”  
Question the sensibility of walking prior to finishing  
    “enjoyed ‘walking’ but felt directionless afterwards”  
Question the purpose of the final  
“Is a final project/paper necessary?”

\* Participants wanted defined expectations, reasonable access, consistent follow up with timely feedback  
\* The booklet should be brought out early on, and mentioned in every class  
\* Final expectations should be discussed in every class; adhering to booklet points  
    (we're not talking topics here-merely process expectations!)

### RELATIONSHIP ISSUES

If not assertive; could get lost or drop the course  
Liked smaller groups  
Need for guidance when picking topics-applicability to work  
Feels overwhelmed when unprepared

\* Appreciated focus group/small group discussion format  
\* Appreciated being invited to participate (especially less assertive)  
\* Felt comfortable in smaller peer groups for questions and concerns  
\* Mentors should be encouraged!



# Don't Get Stuck in the Muck

front

Congratulations! You have finished your coursework and are now contemplating that final paper or project. What's stopping you? Come join a focus group. Speak up! Share your thoughts of what would help you, or what may be preventing you from getting started. Dinner at View is on me!

## Don't Get Stuck in the Muck!!!

back

Sharon Gentile  
2730 West Lake St #608  
Minneapolis, MN 55416

Focus Group & Dinner  
View Restaurant  
2730 West Lake Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55416

RSVP 612-859-5549  
for seat at focus group on  
Wednesday 5/16/07@6:00 pm  
or to schedule  
one on one interview

Postcard Invitation

Augsburg College  
Lindell Library  
Minneapolis, MN 55454